

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: MOPS, PBOR, CG, NI
SUBJECT: PRESS COMMENT ON MOBUTU'S NON-VISIT TO LAGOS

REF: (A) LAGOS 7362, (B) LAGOS 7318

1. IN THE AFTERMATH OF PRESIDENT MOBUTU'S CANCELLATION OF HIS TRIP TO LAGOS, IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT NIGERIAN PRESS COVERAGE AND COMMENT ON MOBUTU'S REGIME IN GENERAL AND ON THE TRIP IN PARTICULAR WAS UNIFORMLY HOSTILE. CURIOUSLY ENOUGH, THE PRESS GOT WORD ABOUT THE TRIP QUITE EARLY, DESPITE MEA'S SUPPOSED DESIRE TO HOLD THE INFORMATION CLOSELY, AND THEN GOT THE WORD LATE ABOUT THE CANCELLATION, CONTINUING TO COMMENT UP THROUGH THE DAY OF MOBUTU'S NON-ARRIVAL, JUNE 15.

2. ON JUNE 15, ALONG WITH A STROY THAT MOBUTU WAS EXPECTED THAT DAY IN LAGOS, THE NEW NIGERIAN (NN) COMMENTED EDITORIALY:
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--"WHY IS HE HERE? THIS IS A SINGULARLY INAPPROPRIATE TIME FOR MOBUTU SESE SEKO OF ZAIRE TO PAY A VISIT TO THIS COUNTRY. PRESUMABLY, HE HAS COME TO GIVE A REHASH OF RECENT EVENTS IN SHABA PROVINCE. ORE ELSE, HE HAS COME TO SELL THE NEO-COLONIALLY INSPIRED MOVE TO SET UP PAN-AFRICAN INTERVENTION FORCE PRESENTLY MADE UP OF

ARMIES OF A FEW PUPPET AFRICAN STATES."

AFTER BLASTING "MOBUTU'S TYRANNICAL AND DISASTROUSLY CORRUPT RULE," THE NN TURNED ITS FIRE ON WESTERN INVOLVEMENT IN SHABA AND NOTED:

"NIGERIA SHOULD ALSO USE THIS OCCASION TO CONDEMN UNEQUIVOCALLY CURRENT WESTERN EFFORTS, SUSTAINED BY AN UNPRECEDENTED BROUHAHA, TO FURTHER THEIR OBJECTIVES, NAMELY TO STYMIE EFFORTS TO LIBERATE SOUTHERN AFRICA AND TO CULTIVATE A READILY "JUSTIFIABLE" REASON FOR FURTHER COVERT INTERVENTION IN AFRICA."

3. SIMILARLY, ON JUNE 16, THE NIGERIAN STANDARD COMMENTED:

"GOOD RIDDANCE. PRESIDENT MOBUTU SESE SEKO OF ZAIRE DID NOT COME TO NIGERIA YESTERDAY ON A SCHEDULED THREE-DAY STATE VISIT. EXTERNAL AFFAIRS COMMISSIONER JOSEPH GARBA SAID THE VISIT WAS CANCELLED. HE DID NOT SAY AT WHOSE REQUEST, BUT NO MATTER, IT IS A GOOD THING IT WAS CANCELLED."

4. IN A CONCLUDING SHOT, THE JUNE 17 NIGERIAN TRIBUNE ADDED:

"WE ARE HAPPY THAT THE ZAIREAN PRESIDENT MOBUTU SESE SEKO IS NOT COMING TO NIGERIA AFTER ALL. HE SHOULD HAVE GONE TO SOUTH AFRICA NOT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NIGERIA. HE IS NOT WELCOMED."

5. COMMENT: AS REFLECTED IN THE PRESS REMARKS, MOBUTU DOES NOT HAVE MANY FRIENDS IN NIGERIA. THE PRESS COMMENTS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES. THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF NIGERIAN STUDENTS CONDEMNED THE VISIT, AND MEA WAS EMBARRASSED ABOUT IT. A REALIZATION OF THE COLD WELCOME AWAITING HIM MAY HAVE BEEN A FACTOR IN MOBUTU'S CANCELLATION OF THE VISIT.

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